



A STUDY OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES IN THE BHUTANESE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Prof. Gara Latchanna¹ | Sonam Daker²

¹ Professor, Department of Education, Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam.

² Research Scholar, Department of Education, Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the reflective teaching practices in the Bhutanese secondary schools. It particularly aimed to find if there exist differences between the groups of teachers with different levels of teaching experiences and gender in terms of the use of reflective teaching strategies in their teaching and learning processes.

The participants consisted of 69 teachers selected using the random sampling from seven Bhutanese secondary schools. The schools include 3 higher secondary and 4 middle secondary schools, geographically dispersed through the country. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire consisting of 25 statements and was analysed using the descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean and standard deviation in SPSS software version 22.

The findings of this study showed that gender and levels of teaching experience made a difference in the use of reflective strategies.

KEYWORDS: Reflective teaching; Reflective practices; reflection; reflective thinking; teaching and learning processes.

Introduction

Modern Education System in Bhutan started in the early 1960s with the launch of the country's first five-year socio-economic development plan. Initially the education system was based on the Indian education system, and even the teachers were hired from India. However, with the set up of a first Primary Teacher Training Institute (TTI) at Samtse (southern Bhutan) in 1968 under the direct command of the Third King of Bhutan and with many Bhutanese graduates sent to pursue master courses in education mostly to India, UK, Canada and Australia helped Bhutanized the education system in Bhutan. Since then, the education system in Bhutan progressed in terms of the number of schools, enrolment in the schools, trained Bhutanese teachers and the curriculum.

Now, the curriculum is mostly in Bhutanese context and except for few expatriate teachers, all the teachers are Bhutanese. The present school education system in Bhutan consist of primary, lower secondary, middle secondary and higher secondary education. And accordingly the schools are titled as Primary, lower secondary, Middle or Higher secondary school. Primary schools covers pre-primary (PP) to grade VI, Lower secondary school from PP to grade VIII, Middle secondary school from grade VIII to X and Higher secondary IX to XII. However, there are some middle secondary and higher secondary schools that have classes right from pre-primary (PP).

This study looked at the reflective teaching practices of middle and higher secondary schools that have classes right from pre-primary onwards.

The objectives of this study are to find:

1. What are the differences between the gender of teachers in terms of the use of reflective practices in their teaching and learning processes?
2. What are the differences between the groups of teachers with different levels of teaching experiences in terms of the use of reflective practices in their teaching and learning processes?

Literature review

• What is reflective teaching?

Reflective teaching has a long traditions and spurts principally from Dewey (1933) work on reflective thinking. Dewey is considered an early key theorist of reflective approaches to professional development, but it was not a extensive feature of the education community. It was only after Schon (1983, 1987), drawing on Dewey's ideas wrote about its practice in education and other professionals, that those who believed in the importance of reflection and reflective teaching started working about the idea. Since then a number of key thinkers have shaped the theory of reflective practice. Now, reflective teaching has been defined and interpreted by various researchers and group in numerous ways. To cite few examples, Jacobs et al (2011) advocate reflective teaching as "a continuous cycle of systematic self- evaluation by a teacher of his/her own teaching through open discussion with colleagues or written analysis" (p.56).

Another definition by these reflective teaching enthusiasts (Moon,1999; Navaneedhan, C.G 2010) suggest reflective teaching as a means to look at what you do in the classroom, think about why you do it, and think about if it works - a

process of self-observation and self-evaluation. Stout, C.J. (1989) defines reflective teaching as both affective traits and behaviours. Reflective teaching is affective in that it requires highly personalized introspection, coupled with the ability to scrutinize thought processes and teaching behaviours objectively. It is behavioural in that reflective teachers act concertedly on what they find as a result of their reflection.

Thus, I would like to sum up reflective teaching as "practices ranging from analyzing a single aspect of a lesson to considering the ethical, social and political implications of teaching practice" (Larrivee, B, 2008, p.341).

• Relevant Studies in Reflective Practices

The empirical findings cited hereafter authenticate the importance of teachers to practice reflective teaching. An early study (Moallem, M, 1997) "The Content and Nature of Reflective Teaching: A Case of an Expert Middle School Science Teacher" suggest that to examine the underlying beliefs and taken for granted assumptions and theories, a teacher should engage in self analysis. Another study in the 1990s (Dyer, B, 1998) "Reflective teaching Practice in Cross-Cultural Contexts: Teaching women's study in Japan" that looked at reflective teaching as a means of professional and curriculum development in a cross-cultural education setting revealed that the process or methodology of teaching was as important as the content. It also revealed that cultural assumptions and beliefs shape student behavior and learning when ensuing reflective practices. A more recent study on reflective teaching supports the above findings. Ogonor, B O. & Badmus, M M.(2006) study on reflective teaching among student teachers during their teaching practice indicated that student teachers were elated and had opportunity for professional growth as they practiced reflective teaching. Another study 'Reflective Teaching in the Early Years: A Case for Mentoring Diverse Educators' by Souto, M; Manning, and Dice, J, L (2007) report that the use of reflection encouraged all involved in the collaborative mentoring team to remain true to the values about education while upholding the state standards. The study concludes that, with reflection, all those involved in the collaborative mentoring group developed from the experience.

Milner, H.R's (2003) Case study of an African American English teacher's cultural comprehensive knowledge and self-reflective planning signify that a more meaningful planning occurred when the teacher got the opportunity to reflect. The reflection gave her the opportunity to consider her students' interest in the planning of the lesson. Belvis, E., Pineda, P., Armengol, C., & Moreno, V. (2013) studied "Evaluation of Reflective practice in teacher education" and it indicates that reflective practice is a constant reflection on one's own interventions to bring about enormous potential in improving teaching and learning processes in classrooms. The study "The Impact of Using Reflective Teaching Approach on Developing Teaching Skills of Primary Science student teachers" by Eman Wefky Ahmed and Khalil Yousef Al-Khalili (2011) report it was effective in assisting science student teachers in evaluating their teaching and learning process; in identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching. It also assisted the teacher in discovering means for correcting and improving his or her teaching.

Another study Lemon, N and Gravis, S (2014) who studied encouraging reflective practice through the use of a reflective template with the future early child-

hood teachers claim that the participants reported of better understanding of the child development and also the 'developmental needs and planning required for quality educational and care' (p.92).

Conclusion

So, it is apparent that implicit or explicit, in all the writings that focus upon reflective teaching, other than the extreme position of theorists concerned solely with the personal development of the individual, is that reflection translate into action and result in improvements in teaching and learning. The principle reason is that a reflective practitioner would combat passivity by constantly diving deeper into their teaching and its effects, rather than drifting on the surface of practice (McEntee, G.H and Check, J.W. 2003).

Methodology

Research site and participants

This study examined the reflective teaching practices of 69 teachers in the seven Bhutanese schools (3 higher secondary schools and 4 middle secondary schools) using a survey method. To gain a rich and cogent data material, the schools are strategically selected from both urban and rural locations and are geographically dispersed through the country.

A total of 69 teachers randomly selected from seven schools participated in this research. The participants' consists of 33 males and 36 females with the teaching experiences ranging from 2 years to 30 years.

Data Collection and analysis

The data were collected using a survey questionnaire containing 25 statements. The questionnaire items covered four themes. The questionnaire was administered to a total of 69 teachers 33 males and 36 females who responded anonymously.

The data was analyzed using the descriptive statistics such as percent, mean and standard deviation in SPSS software, version 22.

Results and discussions

The ensuing paragraphs present the result and discussion according to the research question wise.

Question 1

What are the differences between the groups of teachers with different levels of teaching experiences in terms of the use of reflective strategies in their teaching and learning processes?

To find out whether there are differences between the teachers with different levels of teaching experience, first the mean and the standard deviation of each theme according to the number of teaching years experience was calculated and then the overall mean score of the themes according to the teaching experience were calculated (See table 1 below).

Table 1: Overall mean score of the four themes in terms of teaching experience

Experience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1-5 years and below	7	2.62	0.78
6- 10Years	30	2.61	0.70
11- 15 years	17	2.42	0.75
16 – 20 years	8	2.67	0.81
21 years and above	7	2.64	0.65

As shown in table 1, the teachers teaching for 16 to 20 years have an overall mean score of 2.67 and teachers teaching for 21 and above have an overall mean score of 2.64. Thus, though not highly significant, it is concluded that the teachers teaching in the category 16 and above years seemed to be more reflective than others. This does not support "there is no significant difference between social studies teachers' seniority, workplace and their reflective levels" (Karadag, M. & Sadik, F, 2012, p.38). Further, it also does not align with (Odeh,Z., Kurt,M., & Atamturk,N. (2010) findings of teaching experience not making a significant difference in teachers' reflection.

However, this study is in line with Afshar, H.S. & farahani, M (2015) findings that teaching experience plays a prominent role in both reflective thinking and reflective teaching. They investigated the relationship between reflective teaching and reflective thinking of Iranian EFL teachers regarding gender and teaching experience. They found that as the "teachers' years of teaching experience increase, their levels of reflective teaching and reflective thinking also arise" And concluded that "higher the teaching experience higher the reflective teaching and reflective thinking" (p.619).

Question 2

What are the differences between the gender of teachers in terms of the use of reflective approaches in their teaching and learning processes?

To find out whether there are differences between the male and female teachers regarding the use of reflective teaching practices, first, the mean score and standard deviation for each theme according to gender was calculated. Next, an overall mean score of the four themes in terms of gender was calculated. Then, a chart was drawn to represent and specify the difference in the use of themes in terms of gender

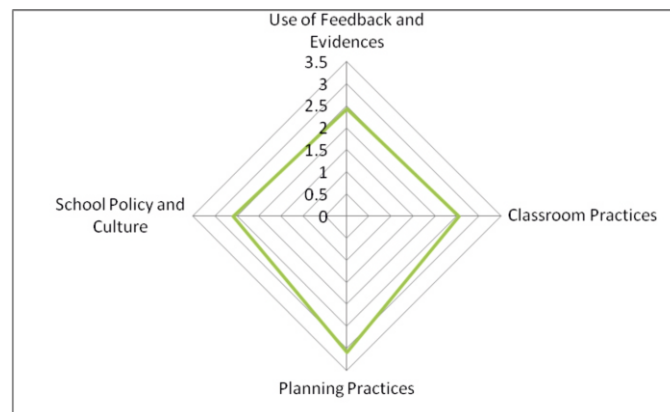


Chart 1: Theme analysis (Male)

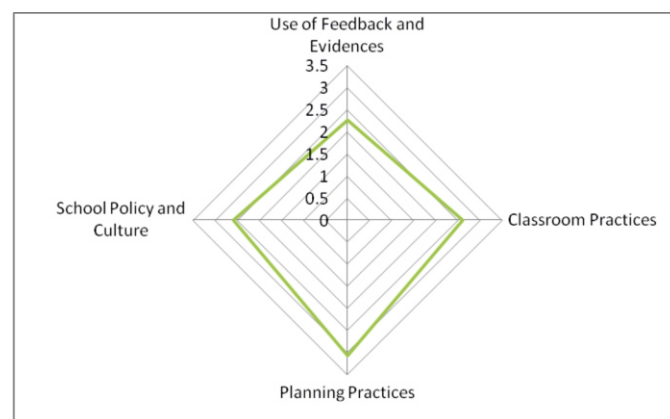


Chart 2: Theme analysis (Female)

The total mean score of the themes in terms of male teachers is 2.66 and that of the female teachers is 2.63 which do not indicate a big range of difference. However, considering the analysis of the themes, the conclusion is that the male teachers who participated in this study are more reflective than the female teachers especially in terms of using the feedback and evidences and planning practices. This study supports Karadag, M and Sadik, F (2012) investigation of social studies teachers' reflective thinking levels in terms of socio-demographic characteristics (an example of Sanliurfa province) which reports of significant difference in gender in terms of reflective practices. The findings of this study are also in line with those of Afshar, H.S. & farahani, M (2015) who investigated whether male and female EFL Iranian teachers were different regarding reflective thinking. The results showed that the male EFL teachers outperformed their female counterparts regarding reflective teaching.

However, does not support Aghaei, P and Jadidi,E (2013) findings that investigated the effect of EFL teachers' language awareness and gender on their reflectivity which report that gender had no effect on teachers' reflectivity. Another study Keshavarzi, S., & Fumani, M. (2015) also suggest that gender was revealed to have no impact on teacher's reflectivity, even though it was observed to be a contributing factor in teaching style.

Conclusion and Suggestions for future research

The findings of this study reveal that the male participants of this study are more reflective in their teaching practices than the female participants. It also reveals that the teaching experiences make a difference in the use of reflective teaching practice.

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are made for future research:

1. This study looked at the reflective teaching in terms of gender and experience of the teachers of middle and higher secondary schools in Bhutan. It is suggested that this study may be replicated with primary and lower secondary schools in Bhutan.
2. This study used a survey questionnaire, therefore, other instruments such as interview, focussed group discussions and class observations can be used for

future research.

3. As a final suggestion, the difference in reflective teaching practices in terms of the teaching subjects could be studies in future.

REFERENCES

1. Afshar, H. S., & Farahani, M. (2015). Reflective thinking and Reflective Teaching among Iranian EFL Teachers: Do Gender and Teaching Experience Make a Difference? *Social and Behaviour Science*, 615-620.
2. Aghaei, P., & Esmaili, J. (2013). The Effect of EFL Teachers' Language Awareness and Gender on their Reflectivity. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied linguistics World*, Vol.4 (3), 94-104.
3. Ahmed, E. W., & Al-Khalili, K. Y. (2011). The Impact of Using Reflective Teaching Approach on Developing Teaching Skills of Primary Science Student Teachers. *Journal of New Horizons in Education*, Volume 3, Issue 2, 58-64.
4. Belvis, E., Pineda, P., Armengol, C., & Moreno, V. (2013). Evaluation of reflective practice in teacher education. *European Journal of Teacher Education*. Vol.36, 279-292.
5. Dewey, J. (1933) *How we think: a re-statement of the relation of reflective thinking in the Educative process*. Chicago: Henry Regnery.
6. Dyer, B. (1998). Reflective Teaching Practice in Cross- Cultural Contexts: Teaching Women's Studies in Japan. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol.26, No.3/4, 152-166.
7. Jacobs, M., Vakalisa, NCG & Gawe, N. 2011. *Teaching-learning dynamics*. Cape Town: Pearson.
8. Karadag, M., & Sadif, F. (2012). Investigation of social studies teachers' reflective thinking levels in terms of socio-demographic characteristics. *Cukurova University Faculty of Education Journal*, Vol.41, No.2, 29-42.
9. Keshavarzi, S., & Fumani, M. (2015). The impact of Teachers' Reflectivity and Gender on their intellectual Excitement and Interpersonal Teaching Style. *Theory and Practice in Language studies*, Vol.5, No.3, 525-534.
10. Larrivee, B. (2008). Development of a tool to assess teachers' level of reflective practice. *Reflective Practice* Vol.9. No.3, 341-360.
11. Lemon, N., & Garvis, S. (2014). Encouraging reflective practice with future early childhood teachers to support the national standards: An Australian case study. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, Vol.39, 89-94.
12. Loughran, J. (2005). *Developing Reflective Practice: Learning about teaching and learning through modelling*. London: Falmer Press.
13. Mälkki, K., & Yläne, S. (2012). From reflection to action? Barriers and bridges between higher education teachers' thoughts and actions. *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 37, 33-50.
14. McEntee, G., Appleby, J., Dowd, J., Grant, J., & Hole, S. (2003). *At the Heart of Teaching: A guide to Reflective Practice*. New York: Teacher College Press.
15. Milner, H. (2003). A case study of an African American English teacher's cultural comprehensive knowledge and self reflective planning. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, vol.18. No.2, 175-196.
16. Moallem, M. (1997). The Content and Nature of Reflective: : Case of an Expert Middle School Science Teacher. *The Clearing House*, Vol. 70, No. 3, 143-150.
17. Moon, J.A. (1999). *Reflection in learning and professional development: Theory and practice*. London: Kogan Page
18. Navaneethan, C.G. (2011). Reflective teaching pedagogy as innovative approach in teacher education through open and distance learning. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*. 20-26
19. Odeh, Z., Kurt, M., & Atamturk, N. (2010). Reflective practice and its role in stimulating personal and professional growth. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from <http://www.quo.edu/english/conference/odeh.pdf>
20. Ogonor, B.O. and Badmus, M.M. (2006). Reflective Teaching Practice among Student Teachers: The Case in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 31 (2)
21. Osterman, K. F., & Kottkamp, R. B. (1993). *Reflective Practice for Educators. Improving Schooling through professional development*. Newbury Park, California: Corwin press, Inc.
22. Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Towards a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
23. Souto, M., Manning, & Dice, J. L. (2007). Reflective Teaching in the Early Years: A Case for Mentoring Diverse Educators. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 6, 425-430.
24. Stout, C. J. (1989). Teachers' Views of the Emphasis on Reflective Teaching Skills during Their Student Teaching. *The Elementary School Journal* Vol. 89, No. 4, 511-527.